

CALFED BAY-DELTA WATERSHED PROGRAM

BDAC Watershed Work Group Meeting Summary

Meeting Date: Friday, June 16, 2000

Meeting Location: Jones & Stokes
2600 V Street
Sacramento, CA

Meeting Attendees: See Attachment A

Introductions

Work Group Co-Chairs Robert Meacher and Martha Davis began the meeting by introducing the meeting participants and reviewing the agenda. Lists of attendees (Attachment A) and meeting handouts (Attachment B) are included with this summary.

Framework for Action

Mr. Meacher announced that CALFED released “California’s Water Future: A Framework for Action” (the Framework) on Friday, June 9, 2000. The announcement was made at the State Capitol with Governor Davis and Interior Secretary Babbitt in attendance. Mr. Meacher stated that the Framework was largely a political document, not a scientific assessment. He pointed out that it included good news for the Watershed Program—a proposed budget of \$300 million for Stage 1 (the first 7 years of implementation). Mr. Meacher congratulated the Work Group on its efforts during the last 2 years to promote the Watershed Program and help to see that it is adequately funded.

Ms. Davis explained that the Framework represents a significant milestone in negotiations; however, it is not the end. The final Programmatic EIS/EIR is expected to be released at the end of July. There will then be a 30-day review period, after which it is anticipated that the Record of Decision (ROD) will be signed at the end of August. Watershed Program Manager John Lowrie added that there may be some items in the Framework that may not be fully assessed in the final Programmatic EIS/EIR. Some of these elements may need further environmental review. However, Mr. Lowrie stated that the Watershed Program is fully described in the Programmatic EIS/EIR. Ms. Davis suggested that the Work Group include time at the next meeting to discuss more fully how the Programmatic EIS/EIR addresses the Watershed Program.

Watershed Program Funding

Ms. Davis provided an update on fiscal year 2001 (FY 2001) funding for the Watershed Program. At the May Work Group meeting, a subgroup was formed to encourage members of the legislature to approve the Watershed Program funding that was proposed in the state budget. However, the legislative committee was on a fast track and finished its negotiations before the volunteer subgroup could be contacted. The good news is that the budget includes the amount of Watershed Program funding requested for FY 2001—\$20 million.

Ms. Davis added that some of the funding for CALFED, Proposition 13, and Proposition 204 has been placed in a trailer bill sponsored by Senator Burton. Such funding for CALFED is contingent upon the signing of the ROD.

A meeting attendee asked if any restrictions would be placed on the \$20 million earmarked for the Watershed Program. Ms. Davis replied that her understanding is that there are no restrictions, but that the money is tied to the signing of the ROD. She added that as budget discussions move forward, good news is coming from the Davis administration about the amount of money coming into the budget. As allocations are reviewed, Program funds may increase. Whether the Watershed Program is targeted for an increase remains to be seen, but the news is encouraging.

Initial Implementation of the Watershed Program

Mr. Lowrie provided an update on the planning for initial implementation of the Watershed Program. Watershed Program staff members have been working on a critical path (timeline) for the release of a request for proposal (RFP) based on three assumptions:

- a ROD is signed,
- appropriation decisions make money available to the Watershed Program, and
- no legal constraints prevent the start of implementation.

Based on these assumptions, it is important that the Watershed Program team is prepared to move funding quickly, efficiently, and effectively down to the local community level so it can begin addressing a set of identified priorities. One important task that the Work Group, a subgroup, the Interagency Watershed Advisory Team (IWAT), and staff members have been working on is to develop a set of criteria that will be used to help guide decisions for granting funds.

Mr. Lowrie discussed the progress that has been made in developing a set of criteria. He referred the Work Group to a handout that listed the draft proposal evaluation criteria for initial implementation of the Watershed Program. Mr. Lowrie explained that the handout reflected most of the comments that the Work Group and IWAT had made regarding criteria in the past few months.

The draft document describes a staged process for soliciting, evaluating, and selecting proposals:

I. Concept Stage. This stage would involve soliciting “pre-proposals”. A pre-proposal would consist of a 1- to 2-page summary of a project concept or idea to be considered for funding. This concept stage has been incorporated into the process both to screen project ideas and to save time for both applicants and reviewers. The criteria for reviewing pre-proposals are fairly general and stem from the Watershed Program principles. Some proposed projects may be a great fit for the Watershed Program; others may not. The Watershed Program team will attempt to refer projects that do not fit to a more appropriate funding agency or organization. The Watershed Program may wish to offer technical assistance so that the applicant can strengthen its project concept for future consideration.

II. Proposal Evaluation Stage. The applicants that submitted the pre-proposals selected

during the first stage will be asked to develop full proposals. Technical assistance will be provided to the applicant during this time. The team of reviewers then will apply a second set of criteria to the proposals. The proposals that best address the evaluation criteria will be pooled for final funding selection.

III. Proposal Section Stage. In the third stage, an additional set of criteria will be applied mostly to the full set of recommended proposals, not so much to individual proposals. The selection process is designed in this manner to ensure that a good set of projects is chosen for the Watershed Program.

Mr. Lowrie explained that several iterations of the criteria have been developed and that the Watershed Program staff, IWAT, Laurel Ames from the Sierra Nevada Alliance (who took a leadership role in the subgroup), and other members of the subgroup have reviewed them. Mr. Lowrie asked the Work Group to review the criteria one more time. He stated that it is important to the Watershed Program to make sure that the criteria are consistent with the Work Group's expectations. Mr. Lowrie asked the Work Group participants to respond within the next week if they feel that any major issues have been left out or that there any inadequacies.

Comments/Questions

A meeting participant asked who would review the proposals. Mr. Lowrie replied that the reviewers have not yet been chosen. It is likely that there will be a different set of reviewers at each stage. CALFED staff is still working out the details about who can participate and who may have a conflict of interest.

Another participant asked how a project that was more cost-effective would rate against one that had a large community involvement component. Mr. Lowrie responded that a fixed method is not in place. The proposed process would basically convene a selected group of people to apply their best judgment. A ranking or scoring procedure has not been developed. The Watershed Program is instead opting for a more subjective method to evaluate proposals. Mr. Lowrie ensured the Work Group that adequate protection will be built into the process so that only projects with effective community-based components will move forward from the pre-proposal stage.

A comment was made regarding the subjectivity involved in reviewing proposals. There may be a fairness issue related to the selection process. A meeting participant recommended that the Watershed Program staff review previous RFPs solicited by the Ecosystem Restoration Program (ERP). Mr. Lowrie responded that staff has reviewed the ERP process. He added that although there may be some similarities in the RFP packages, there will also be some differences, particularly in the way criteria are applied. He added that the ERP is geared to a competitive process—comparing one project against another based on scores. The Watershed Program has taken the approach that although there is a competitive element to the process, there will be more flexibility. For example, if the reviewers find that a pre-proposal has some good qualities but needs some refinement, technical assistance may be offered to help the applicant strengthen the proposal for future consideration.

A Work Group member gave kudos to the Watershed Program for being so inclusive and open in developing the criteria.

A recommendation was made that the text of the RFP package strongly encourage applicants to reach out to their communities when they design their projects.

A meeting attendee asked whether an applicant would have to meet all the criteria to be eligible for funding. Mr. Lowrie replied that all applicants will have to address each of the criteria, and that how well they do this will be up to the reviewers. The RFP package will ask the applicant a series of questions directly related to the criteria.

Mr. Lowrie was asked who would make the final selections on proposals. He replied that different groups will review the set of proposals recommended during the proposal selection stage. These may include some members of the Work Group, CALFED Program managers, and members of the Policy Group and the Bay-Delta Advisory Council.

A meeting participant asked whether these criteria would be applied to the ERP. Mr. Lowrie replied that they would not; they would be applied only to the Watershed Program.

During a discussion of the RFP package, it was suggested that the Watershed Program staff refer to the Department of Water Resources' Urban Streams Restoration Program. This program's RFP is simple, user-friendly, and interactive.

RFP Schedule

Mr. Lowrie explained that staff members have been working on a schedule for the RFP and a list of tasks to meet this schedule. The following are some of the milestones that have been identified based on the assumptions mentioned earlier:

- October 1, 2000—Release of RFP package
- November 10, 2000—Due date for pre-proposals
- December 8, 2000—Announcement of pre-proposals selected for advancement to next level
- December 8, 2000–February 9, 2001—Proposal development
- February 9–March 12, 2001—Review of proposals
- March 12, 2001—Announcement of recommended proposals
- March 12–June 1, 2001—External review of proposals
- June 1, 2001—Announcement of selected proposals

Mr. Lowrie stated that the schedule was quite compressed considering the number of tasks involved and that it includes an additional stage that most RFPs do not—a pre-proposal stage.

Comments/Questions

A comment was made that additional time should be given for the proposal development because of the holidays.

A meeting attendee asked whether technical assistance would be given to applicants during the pre-proposal stage. Mr. Lowrie responded that workshops, but not individual technical assistance, will be offered during that time. Personalized technical assistance will be offered while full proposals are being developed.

It was recommended that the individuals who provide technical assistance be excluded from the

review panel. It was also suggested that the review panel have regional knowledge. Mr. Lowrie replied that it is likely that one level of review will be conducted by a regional team of individuals to bring local knowledge and expertise to the process. The regions would be similar to those identified by CALFED for the program as a whole:

- Northern California,
- Bay Area,
- Delta,
- San Joaquin Valley, and
- Southern California.

A meeting participant commented that an independent peer review may be beneficial. An independent review was conducted for the ERP; it was helpful to have individuals without a stake give their expert, outside opinion on project quality.

Local Watershed Presentation

Gregg Bates from the Dry Creek Conservancy gave a presentation on the Dry Creek watershed. Dry Creek is one of several small Sacramento River tributaries located between the American and Bear rivers. A total of 80% of its approximately 100 square miles is located in Placer County.

The Dry Creek Coordinated Resources Management Program (CRMP) coordinates four primary activities:

- education and outreach,
- planning and coordination,
- restoration, and
- monitoring.

Mr. Bates presented a series of slides to the Work Group that displayed the characteristics of and some of the projects in the watershed. He noted that there is a strong need for support for CRMP watershed coordination functions because most of that work is presently done pro bono by the Dry Creek Conservancy. Such an active role in coordination sometimes conflicts with the Conservancy role as a separate stakeholder in the CRMP.

Watershed Updates

Watershed Legislation

The latest draft of Assembly Bill 2117 was distributed to the Work Group. Laurel Ames announced that the next hearing was scheduled for June 27, 2000. The legislation is sponsored by Assembly Member Wayne and is close to being in its final form. No money is attached to the bill with the possible exception of an appropriation for administrative costs of the program. Funding would come later through appropriations.

California Biodiversity Council (CBC) Watershed Work Group

Nina Gordon from the Resources Agency announced that CBC will hold its annual joint meeting with the Regional Council of Rural Counties on September 20. Ms. Gordon also updated the Work Group on the progress of the CBC Watershed Work Group (CBC WWG). An arm of the CBC, the CBC WWG is a standing committee whose initial focus is on

watershed funding issues. The group will continue to address myriad other watershed issues that it can affect. With respect to funding, the desired outcome is to convene stakeholders throughout the state to address critical issues such as locating funding sources, making RFPs simpler and more user-friendly, and conducting outreach, then recommending changes. Some changes may be short-term, others long-term; some may require legislative changes. The CBC WWG has been working on this issue for some time and has issued a draft paper entitled “Best Funding Practices for Watershed Management”. The paper will be presented to the CBC in its final draft form on September 20, 2000. Ms. Gordon distributed copies to the meeting participants and asked them to review it and provide feedback.

Ms. Gordon was asked what kind of changes could be anticipated from the development of this paper. She replied that the CBC WWG will proceed with specific actions such as:

- gaining commitments from agencies,
- developing a one-stop-shopping database to retrieve funding information,
- providing assistance with grant proposal writing, and
- developing a joint pre-proposal form for myriad watershed funding sources.

A meeting participant commended Ms. Gordon for the good work that the CBC WWG has done, but stated that no real change will take place until agency heads truly believe that local groups are instrumental in achieving the agencies’ goals. It will take a change in culture before other changes can be made. Ms. Gordon replied that they can help make this change by promoting education, building local capacity, and working with the members of the CBC.

Salmonid Restoration and Foundation Board

Martha Turner from the Salmonid Restoration Federation announced that the federation’s annual conference will take place in early March at California State University, Chico, and will focus on watershed management and monitoring. Ms. Turner stated that the federation was looking for input on conference topics and speakers. Some of the possible topics include:

- fire and fuels management,
- K–12 watershed education,
- permitting processes and regulations,
- fish passage barriers,
- water quality monitoring,
- habitat monitoring,
- San Joaquin Valley issues, and
- watershed tales.

Next Meeting

Mr. Meacher announced that the next Work Group meeting would be held on the usual third Friday of the month—July 21, 2000.

Attachment A

Meeting Participants

Name	Affiliation
Ames, Laurel	Sierra Nevada Alliance
Barris, Lynn	Sacramento River Watershed Program Resource Center
Bates, Gregg	Dry Creek Conservancy
Baumgartner, Steve	California Department of Fish and Game
Bowker, Dennis	Sacramento River Watershed Program
Brown, Carrie	Office of Senator Johannessen
Burson, John	b.a.i. Co./Wessman Ind.
Cooper Carter, Kristin	Research Foundation
Crooks, Bill	City of Sacramento
Davis, Martha	Inland Empire
Drake, Nettie	Panoche/Silver Creek CRMP
Fox, Dennis	OSSC
Gonzales, Robert	East Bay Municipal Utility District
Gordon, Nina	California Resources Agency
Guzman, Martha	United Farm Workers
Hard, Eddie	U.S. Geological Survey
Harthorn, Allen	Sacramento River Watershed Program
Heiman, Dennis	Regional Water Quality Control Board—Redding
Knecht, Mary Lee	Jones & Stokes
Laychak, Eugenia	California Center for Dispute Resolution/CALFED
Lowrie, John	CALFED Watershed Program
Meacher, Robert	Plumas County Supervisor/RCRC/BDAC
Prange, Paul	City of San Jose
Reeves, Kent	East Bay Municipal Utility District
Rentz, Mark	California Forestry Association
Shull, Lee	New Fields
Sime, Fraser	California Department of Water Resources—Red Bluff
Smith, Cheryl	UC Davis—Center for Ecological Health Research
Spellman, Melissa	California Department of Water Resources
Stetson, Luree	California Department of Conservation
Tupper, Julie	U.S. Forest Service
Turner, Martha	Salmonid Restoration Federation
Ward, Kevin	UC Davis—ICE
Wehri, Tom	California RCD
Zimny, Chris	California Department of Forestry

Meeting Handouts

- ✓ Meeting Agenda
- ✓ California's Water Future: A Framework for Action
- ✓ Draft CALFED Watershed Program Proposal Evaluation Criteria
- ✓ Assembly Bill 2117
- ✓ CBC WWG draft "Best Funding Practices for Watershed Management"